



Recognising your Competencies



www.acqf.africa

Project ACQF-II: Supporting implementation of African Continental Qualifications Framework



4th ACQF Forum
Micro-credentials for better opportunities

On 13-14 November 2024
Hotel Savoy
Victoria, Seychelles

1. Introduction

The Project "African Continental Qualifications Framework" (ACQF-II) organises the 4th continental "Forum of the institutions of National Qualifications Frameworks", in partnership with the African Union, African countries, Regional Economic Communities. This workshop is co-organised with Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA), and will take place in Victoria, Seychelles, from **13 to 14 November 2024**, at the Hotel Savoy.

This Forum is focused on the theme: **Micro-credentials for better opportunities.**

The workshop languages will be English, French, and Portuguese. Streaming will be available to ensure wider participation.

Main sources for learning and information:

- [ACQF Policy document](#). 2023
- [ACQF Thematic Brief 13](#), 2023. Micro-credentials: concepts, debates, experiences – towards a common understanding in different parts of the world.
- ACQF Handbook on Micro-credentials: forthcoming
- [ACQF Survey on Micro-credentials in Africa, 2024: summary report](#)
- [ACQF Survey on Micro-credentials in Africa, 2024: analytical report](#)
- [ACQF Survey on Micro-credentials in Seychelles, 2024: analytical report](#).

2. Micro-credentials: international developments, some definitions

National governments, and regional and international organisations have intensified debate and research with the aim to define the role and place of Micro-credentials in national education systems and qualifications frameworks, enhancing their benefits for lifelong learning and employability. In 2022 UNESCO proposed a common definition of micro-credentials¹, based on a process of experts' consultation of global scope. In June 2022 the European Union approved the Council Recommendation² on a European Approach to Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability.

All definitions emphasise key elements, such as: assessment, quality assurance and focused learning achievements.

- **The proposed UNESCO definition is:**
"A micro-credential:
 - Is a record of focused learning achievement verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do.
 - Includes assessment based on clearly defined standards and is awarded by a trusted provider.
 - Has standalone value and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials, including through recognition of prior learning
 - Meets the standards required by relevant quality assurance."
- **The definition agreed in the European Union is:**
 - 'Micro-credential' means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and

¹ UNESCO (2022). Towards a common definition of micro-credentials. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381668>

² Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability 2022/C 243/02 ST/9790/2022/INIT https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2022.243.01.0010.01.ENG

are portable. They may be stand-alone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity.

3. Background

The ACQF-II project was launched in April 2023 to support the implementation of ACQF as a continental policy instrument, contributing to transparency, comparability and recognition of qualifications, collaboration between NQFs, promotion of lifelong learning, and support to Member States in the development of NQFs and related policies. The ACQF-II project supports referencing of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) to ACQF; and develops and operationalises innovative tools such as the [Qualifications and Credentials Platform](#) (national and continental levels), the RPL campaign, and [Skills Data Focus](#) (labour market intelligence tools). The [ACQF Website](#) is home to all outputs and updated information on the activities.

This 4th ACQF Forum, focused on “Micro-credentials for better opportunities” is part of the programme of capacity development, dialogue and peer-to-peer sharing workshops organised by the ACQF-II project in 2024. Other topics addressed in the 4th Forum are: referencing between NQFs and ACQF; the ACQF Qualifications and Credentials Platform (QCP); Green Skills – Green ACQF.

4. Recommendations of the previous ACQF Forums in 2024

The [1st NQF Forum](#) took place in Kinshasa (18-20 June 2024) and recommended:

1. Support and boost the development and implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) – inclusive and comprehensive, future-proof, adaptable to the demands of digital and green transformation, supporting employability, social inclusion and lifelong learning, and supported by evidence.
2. Support the connection and mutual trust between qualifications frameworks at the 3 levels (national-regional and continental): through referencing, the ACQF platform of qualifications, innovations, the RPL campaign, and sharing of good practices. Support the establishment of the African Network of Qualifications Frameworks, to ensure the sustainability of the achievements of the ACQF-II project.
3. Create synergies and complementarities between the ACQF and the Addis and Global Recognition Conventions – with common objectives and practical actions.
4. Harness the innovative power of the green and digital transformation of jobs and skills. Joint policies and practices to develop green and digital skills: national, sectoral and specific (education and training, qualifications, innovation, academic research and links with industry). Ensure an active role of NQFs, Regional Qualifications Frameworks and ACQFs as catalysts.
5. An urgent call to action: explore, develop and implement micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability linked to National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs).
6. Implement data systems and tools: interoperable databases on qualifications at all levels and sub-sectors; implementation of RPL; Real-time data and analysis on skills demand. Learners' achievements.
7. Share experiences and best practices through sharing platforms: technical guidelines and documentation, qualifications standards and other achievements of interest for the success and impact of the NQF, RQF and ACQF.

8. Strengthen the capacities of institutions, human resources and stakeholders.

Recommendations of the 2nd ACQF Forum (5-6/September 2024, Luanda):

1. To develop recommendations towards Green NQFs, Green Curriculum.
2. To prepare and start the pilot phase of referencing between RQFs and ACQF.
3. To seek synergy and linkages between RPL-CATS-Microcredentials policies.
4. To reflect on sustainable NQF governance models.
5. To reinforce the use of AI in management of NQFs, registration of qualifications and data analysis.
6. Continue to promote and support mutual learning, peer sharing and knowledge-creation among NQF institutions and related stakeholders in all countries.

Recommendations of the 3rd ACQF Forum (1-4/October 2024, Nairobi):

In the context of PDCA approach (Plan-Do-Check-Act) and based on cooperation and mutual learning between all African countries, continue development and enhance support to RPL policies and implementation, with particular attention to the following aspects:

1. **Common vision:** Develop common features, components and guidelines for harmonised RPL policies and practices trusted and understandable across countries.
2. **RPL Guidelines:** use ACQF Guidelines and the new Handbook RPL for Practitioners as a reference for national level policies and practices.
3. **RPL Implementation:** building on lessons from experience, it is recommended to develop and apply the full package of policy implementations tools and mechanisms, such as RPL strategy and plan, a specific monitoring and evaluation framework with supporting data collection and analysis to guide continuous improvement.
4. **RPL implementation:** should benefit from insights, relevant lessons and experiences from other countries / regions, and be based on sharing of good practice, mutual help and harmonisation.
5. **RPL target groups:** implementation of RPL should promote and foster social inclusion and fully apply the principle “noone is left behind”; particular attention is due to the needs of migrants, returning migrants and refugees.
6. **RPL costing and financing:** renewed attention to design and implement sustainable models, sharing common features, building on complementarities and diversity of stakeholders and end-user organisations.
7. **RPL innovation:** highlight and promote the innovation edge of RPL for the wider eco-system of lifelong learning and qualifications, in particular: widen the scope of RPL to include all sub-sectors of education and training; holistic and candidate-centred assessment modalities and practices; explicit articulation with other policies and mechanisms supporting progression and mobility such as credit accumulation and transfer and micro-credentials; contextualisation of language requirements for RPL processes; pointers and orientations concerning renewal of existing qualifications and development of new qualifications; Green skills, Green RPL.

5. Objectives of the 4th ACQF Forum

This Micro-Credentials Forum aims to define a first consensual view towards a common approach for ACQF and Africa on micro-credentials for better opportunities.

Main themes explored at the 4th ACQF Forum focused on Micro-credentials are:

- Micro-credentials in global developments: trends, cases
- Micro-credentials in the African context: growing interest, policy initiatives, current panorama
- Micro-credentials in lifelong learning policies
- Research underpinning micro-credentials
- Micro-credentials – a core component of the ACQF: the new Handbook on Micro-credentials.

As usual, the agenda includes space to advance the ACQF implementation activities in particular:

- ACQF implementation: referencing to ACQF, Qualifications and Credentials Platform (QCP), Green Skills-Green ACQF

Participants: this Forum will be attended onsite and online.

- **Onsite:** 25 representatives from 16 African countries and 2 economic regions. 20 participants from national institutions. Certificates of participation will be delivered to all assiduous participants.
- **Online:** the invitation to join via Zoom will be shared to all involved countries and institutions

6. Agenda

Seychelles Time (UTC - GMT+4)

Day 1 – 13/Nov: Micro-credentials: Global and African trends and dynamics

- **Chairpersons:** Ms Fiona Ernesta (CEO of SQA), Eduarda Castel-Branco
- **Facilitators' team:** Eduarda Castel-Branco (ACQF-II coordinator); James Mwewa (ACQF-II expert); Greta Kirdulyté (ACQF-II-PPMI expert)

09.15-10.00

Session 1: Opening.

Speakers: Ministry of Education of Seychelles. Chief Executive Officer of SQA. ACQF-II project coordinator.

- Official opening. Welcome.
- Objectives of the workshop
- Brief introduction of the participants

10.00-11.00

Session 2: Micro-credentials for better opportunities. Overview of micro-credentials systems and their impacts. Trends, achievements and emerging issues.

Speakers: Eduarda Castel-Branco, Greta Kirdulyté

- Presentation: Micro-credentials in the ACQF context. *Eduarda Castel-Branco*
- Presentation: Global overview of policy developments, key trends, and emerging issues. *Greta Kirdulyté*
- Discussion

11.00-11.15: Coffee break (Hotel Savoy)

11.15-11.45

Session 3: Keynote speech: Micro-credentials for better opportunities – could Africa take a leading place? By: Prof Mark Brown (online)

11.45-13.00

Session 4: Micro-credentials in the global context – shaping innovation, supporting flexibility, responding to massive skills needs of the green and digital transformation. Challenges and barriers. Sharing of good practices – short presentations.

Facilitators: *Euarda Castel-Branco, James Mwewa*

- **Policy developments, impacts from implementation: trends and new perspectives - from research and practical implementation:**
 - CEDEFOP: *Ms Anastasia Pouliou*
 - OECD: *Mr Simon Roy*
 - New Zealand Qualifications Authority: *Ms Melinda Hall*
- Plenary discussion.
- Conclusions

13.00-14.00: Lunch break (Hotel Savoy)

14.00-16.30

**Session 5: Micro-credentials in the African context.
Presentation of 3 country cases. Working Group discussions.**

Facilitators: *Euarda Castel-Branco, James Mwewa*

Presentations: 20 min per case

- **Mauritius – the new Micro-Credentials Framework. A game changer for the country and an example for Africa?** Speaker: *Prof. Romeela Mohee. Commissioner, Higher Education Commission.*
- **Seychelles – Micro-credentials panorama in the country – results of the first survey focused on micro-credentials.** Speaker: *Noella Baker-Albert (SQA).*
- **Kenya – Quality assurance and registration of (proxies of) micro-credentials in the NQF Register.** Speaker: *Rita Mwuhunga (KNQA)*

Discussion in working groups: Main take-aways from all sessions of day 1

Debate of 4 main topics in 4 working groups (1 topic per group). Organisation and time: 50 min for group discussion + 5-10 min for presentation to plenary. Each group appoints a facilitator and a rapporteur to support an effective discussion.

- Types of Micro-credentials for different social and personal development purposes, impact for better opportunities: objectives, models, features, benefits and success factors.
- Quality assurance of Micro-credentials: main requirements, practices, innovations, challenges.
- Micro-credentials and stackability: features, solutions, new perspectives, challenges.
- Micro-credentials in the NQF: different options, similarities, distinctive features, opportunities for innovation and more inclusive NQF scope. Linkages with other tools and policies of the NQF.

Debate concludes with brief presentations from all working groups.

16.15-16.50

Session 6: Green skills, Green NQF, Green micro-credentials.

Speaker: *Euarda Castel-Branco.*

- Presentation

Coffee break

Day 2 – part I – 14/Nov: Towards a common approach to micro-credentials in Africa

Chairpersons: Eduarda Castel-Branco and Fiona Ernesta

09.00-09.15: Welcome. Recap of day 1.

Speakers: Mr Mboni Dlamini (Eswatini)

09.15-11.30

Session 7: ACQF Micro-credentials Handbook – Presentation.
Debate, comments, proposals from the stakeholders

Speakers: Eduarda Castel-Branco, Greta Kirdulyté

09.15-10.15: Presentation: ACQF Micro-credentials Handbook.

- Rationale, objectives, scope of the Handbook
- Using the Handbook – main topics, examples, references
- Towards a common approach on micro-credentials for Africa - pointers and recommendations.

10.15-11.15: Structured debate - comments, ideas and proposals.

- In 4 working groups - debate on the Chapter 6 of the Handbook: "Towards a common approach to Micro-credentials - pointers and recommendations". All Working groups discuss the proposals and recommendations.
- Online interventions - to complete the debate

11.15-11.30: Poll - to collect views, comments and proposals on the overall Handbook and its use. Conclusions and next steps in respect to the Handbook.

11.30-11.45: Coffee break

Day 2 – part II – 14/Nov: Implementing the ACQF - focus on the Qualifications and Credentials Platform and Referencing to ACQF.

11.45-13.00

Session 8: ACQF Qualifications and Credentials Platform – training 4

Facilitators: Team Cognizone Consortium

13.00-14.00: Lunch break

14.00-15.30:

Session 9: Referencing to ACQF. Reports from 5 pilot countries – draft 3. Comparison. Discussion. Conclusions

Facilitator: Eduarda Castel-Branco.

Speakers: ARES (Cabo Verde), KNQA (Kenya) SQA (Seychelles), SAQA (South Africa), ZAQA (Zambia)

15.30-16.30

Session 10: Referencing to ACQF. Reports from new pilot countries – draft 1. Discussion

Facilitator: Eduarda Castel-Branco

Speakers: EQA (Eswatini); HEC (Lesotho); Zimbabwe.

16.30-16.45

Session 11: Discussion of the Referencing process and reports. Comparative analysis of main findings and conclusions. Recommendations and next steps.

***Speaker:** Eduarda Castel-Branco*

16.45-17.30

Session 12: Final conclusions. Closure

***Facilitators:** SQA, ACQF-II*

- Final conclusions and recommendations
- Distribution of participation certificates.
- Closure

Final Coffee break

My Notes

